



# The Roots of Trust in Romania

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**Abstract.** In this article, I am going to concentrate on a particular aspect of the social capital, namely the institutional and interpersonal trust. My aim was to prove that the trust toward different types of institutions follows a specific internal structure. My further goal was to identify the correlations between the different socio-demographic categories and the types of institutions which these categories tend to trust or distrust. I find this approach relevant due to the fact that in a relatively new democratic country the changes and the acceptance of the changes both on institutional and interpersonal level can play a key role in legitimizing the current economic and political system. For my analysis, I rely on the data from the European Value Survey (EVS), where the latest wave, which includes Romania, was completed in 2008. The main finding of my analysis is that the trust in institutions – at least in Romania – as perceived by the population, does have a coherent internal structure. I succeeded in identifying five main types of institutions which share a similar variance of trust. I also managed to pinpoint a few of the variables that have a significant explanatory value regarding the institutional and general trust perceived by the Romanian population.

**Keywords:** institutional trust, general trust, European Value Survey, Romania

## Introduction

The concept of social capital gained a central role in the current sociological literature as it is considered to be a major factor in explaining the differences in the context of economic success and development in market based economies and in the democratic political systems (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995; Bădescu 2003; Farrell and Knight 2003). Moreover, the social capital is also connected to geographically identifiable regions across Europe, like North, South, East and West (van Oorschot, Arts and Gelissen 2006; Halman and Lujix 2006; Frane 2008; Voicu and Voicu 2011; Sandu 2011). Unfortunately, the majority of

the comparative studies omit Romania, mainly due to the lack of data in the different waves of the international data collections.

Accepting the key role of the social capital as a stabilizer or a motor of the market based economy and democracy, I am going to concentrate on a particular aspect of the social capital, namely the institutional and interpersonal trust. I find this approach relevant due to the fact that in a relatively new democratic country the changes and the acceptance of the changes, both on institutional and interpersonal level, can play a key role in legitimizing the current economic and political system.

Beside the general interest for trust, I think that in Romania, along with other post-communist countries, it is important to identify the interconnection between the trust and volunteer participation and the development of newly emerged democratic institutions. A previous research shows that the communist regimes had a significant negative effect on institutional and personal trust in the case of East Germany (Rainer and Siedler 2009), a situation which is considered relevant for Romania as well (Tufiş 2007).

## **The main concepts**

The notion of trust was, and still is, a commonly used concept in the near past (Li 2012, 101), leading to a wide range of conceptualizations and interpretations. In the effort of conceptualizing the social capital, a wide range of definitions occurred, which intended to grasp the mean essence of the notion. The presented situation is further complicated by the fact that the recognition of its explanatory power led to a wide range of usage in and outside sociology. By analyzing the evolution of the concept, two main types of general approaches can be observed.

Firstly, trust was operationalized in many ways in sociology, mainly as a component or a manifestation of the social capital. In consequence, there are just a few approaches dealing solely with this notion as it is, and so it was conceptualized and operationalized as an integrant part of a higher level concept. I will present the notion of trust by drawing a parallel with the definition of social capital. On the other hand, the notion of trust is defined as a solely factor which itself has a great explanatory power in different social and economical analyses.

According to the first approach, the definition of trust is closely interconnected with the definition of social capital. From this point of view there are also two types of approaches. The first one is a continuation of Bourdieu's definition, where the social capital appears on the micro-level and functions as any other type of capital. On the other hand, Putnam raises the concept of social capital to the macro level, assuming that its positive presence not only facilitates the achievements of a singular person, but also plays a key role on a societal level. Following this theoretical approach, the majority of the comparative studies are

based on measuring social capital and classify European countries by this point of view (Freitag 2003; van Oorschot, Arts and Gelissen 2006; Frane 2006; Halman and Luijkx 2006; Balamoune-Lutz 2011; Voicu and Voicu 2011).

The concept of social capital in Putnam's book *Making Democracy Work* "refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and social networks" (Putnam 1993, 167). Accepting this definition as a starting point, trust itself could be considered as a social organization and as such an independent factor which can exist in various amounts in different societies.

In this approach, the notion of norm is concretized as "norm of reciprocity" (Halman and Luijkx 2006, 70). Reciprocity, according to Polányi (1976), is an economic mechanism, and so the term of trust has a strong interconnection with the economical situation of those societies in which it is present. Analyzing the relation between reciprocity and trust, Lewis (2008) stated that the positive interconnection creates a moral frame for economic cooperation.

According to Granovetter (2005, 33), the social structure materialized in social networks has a decisive impact on economics from three points of view: information flow and quality; the social networks play an important role in informal social control, and the generalized trust in others, so then everyone will behave "right".

Focusing on this interconnection, it seems to be evident that the level of trust and the economical situation are strongly interrelated. This line of thought is present in the works of Fukuyama: "in all successful economic societies these communities are united by trust" (Fukuyama 1995, 9), "as it helps to reduce the risks and transaction costs of relationships" (Nooteboom 2007, 30).

The other importance of trust in Fukuyama's approach is that, at this level, trust gains two different attributions: firstly, trust is considered to be an independent social fact, in the Durkheimian sense which can act solely in a society; secondly, trust is raised from the individual level to a societal level.

This kind of duality of trust is signalled by Delhey, Newton and Welzle, whose analyses make a distinction between the level and radius of the trust. In their definition "...the radius of trust determines the width of the cooperation circle, while the level of trust determines the intensity of civic cooperation within this circle" (Delhey et al. 2011, 787). According to the authors, from this perspective, the "general trust ...is the product of the level and the radius of trust in »most people«" (Delhey et al. 2011, 789).

The notions of norm and trust are frequently interconnected in the literature. Accepting the formal and informal social institutions as the representatives of the norms accepted in a society, the linkage between social institutions and trust is obvious. However, if one tries to define the casual direction of these two factors, the literature provides answers in both ways. In Farrell and Knight's point of view, the institutions – both formal and informal – are the ones that affect the trust of

the social actors by creating incentives to behave trustworthy (Farrell and Knight 2003, 541–542).

Furthermore, Farrell and Knight refer to Hardin's argument, according to which the institutions are the social responses against opportunism. Following this approach, from a functionalist perspective, it can be stated that the institutions that protect the members of a society which has created them, can be trusted. This statement is similar to Fukuyama's point of view, as in those societies where the level of trust is high, the social organizations – which are the materialization of social institutions – are created by the members of those societies without any inner or outer support (Fukuyama 1995, 16).

The conceptualizations of trust can also be categorized by the theoretical approach. Mishler and Rose (2001) make a distinction between two theoretical traditions which are dealing with the origins of trust: A. the cultural theories assume that trust is a continuum of interpersonal trust, and thus institutional trust depends rather on socialization than on its actual performance. In other words, the amount of trust towards the institutions does not depend on their actual performance. B. according to institutional theories, trust in institutions is the consequence of their everyday performance (Mishler and Rose 2001, 31).

## **Previous research results regarding Romania**

Unfortunately, there are only a few researches that analyze Romania from the perspective of trust and/or social capital. It is not this paper's aim to search for the cause of this situation, so I am going to present the researches I could find dealing with institutional trust.

One of the first publications which dealt with institutional trust in Romania was written by Sandu (1999). Analyzing continuous data of the first decade of the post-1989 period – more precisely, from November 1990 to May 1999 –, the author identifies three categories of institutions based on the level of trust toward them: first, those institutions which were continuously losing the trust of the citizens (such as the Government); the second category contained the church and the army, with a constant, high and positive level of trust; and thirdly there was the category of institutions which were recovering from the distrust accumulated during the socialist period (such as the police) (Sandu 1999, 74–78).

The presented evolution of trust in institutions is confirmed at a later point by Abraham and Gânju, as the church and the army possesses the highest level of trust in Romania. Even if the presented institutions are grouped differently in the table and in the text, the results show a continuously high level of confidence in the church and the army. The second category, with an “average level of trust” – meaning around 50 percent – is formed by the presidency, the local councils, justice and

police. The third group is composed by the political parties, parliament syndicates and government, registering a low level of trust (Abraham and Gânju 2000, 82–85).

A subsection of Zamfir's book (2004) presents some new data (up to 2003) regarding trust in the institutions of Romania. According to his point of view, the low and continuous levels of trust in democratic and representative institutions, like the political parties, government and parliament are the result of a moral crisis of these institutions, originated from the very first period of the new era, as in the first stage they were not capable to fulfil the citizens' enthusiastic expectations, and afterwards the political life lost its democratic character many times (Zamfir 2004, 52–54).

Searching the link between trust and democracy, Bădescu (2003) proves in a comparative study that generalized trust is a resource for democracy. In his study, Tufiş (2007) distinguishes four types of institutions in Romania: institutions of the state, institutions of the NGO-s, traditional institutions and international institutions, where the levels of trust in these groups confirm the previous results.

In my study, I intend to analyze institutional and interpersonal trust as an individual characteristic of a person, and as a dependent variable, so I am going to attempt to identify those socio-demographical indicators which present the differentiating factors in the accumulation of the different types of trust.

## Data measurements and methodology

### Data

For my analysis, I rely on the data from the European Value Survey (EVS), where the latest wave, which includes Romania, was completed in 2008. The EVS provides datasets from a cross-national representative sample, which includes variables regarding institutional and interpersonal trust. Due to the aim of my study, I only use the data which represent the Romanian sample in the fourth wave.<sup>1</sup> This includes 1489 cases, which is representative for the adult population of Romania.

### Measurements

#### *The dependent variables*

The institutions and the level of trust toward them are presented in Table 1. In the questionnaire these variables were included in Q63 (A - R) "...tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, a great deal, quite a lot, not very much, or none at all." (In some rows, not amounting the exact 100% is due to roundups.)

1 EVS (2010): European Values Study 2008, 4<sup>th</sup> wave, Romania. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne, Germany, ZA4773 Data File Version 1.1.0 (2010-11-30), doi:10.4232/1.10168.

**Table 1.** The hypothesized indicators of institutional trust (EVS 2008)

Item	Frequency (valid percent)			
	a great deal	quite a lot	not very much	none at all
Church	56	31	11	3
Armed Forces	29	47	18	5
Education System	27	47	22	4
The Press	11	33	42	14
Labour Union	8	28	43	21
The Police	15	40	30	15
Parliament	6	19	44	32
The Civil Services	6	25	47	22
Social Security System	8	38	41	13
The Government	6	19	41	35
The Political Parties	4	14	41	42
Major Companies	7	28	45	21
The Environmental Protection Movement	11	38	36	15
Health Care System	14	40	32	15
Justice System	10	31	38	21
The European Union	18	43	29	10
NATO	17	40	31	13
The United Nations	18	41	29	12

The second hypothesized component of the trust is the generalized one, which was present in the questionnaire through the following variables (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The hypothesized indicators of generalized trust (EVS 2008)

Questions	Type of measurement	Descriptive Mean (standard deviation)
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (Q7)	1-2 ordinal scale 1 = most people can be trusted 2 = can't be too careful	1 = 16.1% 2 = 75.4% DK, NA = 8.5%
...do you think that most people try to get advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair? (Q8)	1-10 ordinal scale 1 = try to get advantage 10 = try to be fair	3.84 (2.74)
Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? (Q9)	1-10 ordinal scale 1 = look out for themselves 10 = try to be helpful	4.49 (2.82)

According to the literature on the comparative studies, the countries are considered to be homogenous from this perspective (Oorschot, Arts and Gelissen 2006; Halman and Lujikx 2006; Frane 2008). Moreover, Fukuyama also makes distinction between the countries as they were homogenous entities (Fukuyama 1995). Accepting these theoretical bases, as the data is from a single country, from a single wave, my hypothesis is based on the findings of the previous researches describing and interpreting the evolution of different types of trust in Romania (Abraham 2000; Tufiş 2007; Nistor, Tîrhas and Iluţ 2011; Voicu and Voicu 2012), namely that institutional trust has an internal structure specific for Romania.

Beside this hypothesis, my research has an exploratory aspect in which I intend to identify the roots of the different types of trust specific to Romania.

### **The explanatory variables**

The European Values Survey includes several variables which reveal a person's socio-demographic and economical status. In order to identify the roots of trust, I included into my analysis the following ones: age (recoded in three categories: 18–35 years old: 36.66%; 36–55 years old: 33.46%; 56 years old or older: 29.88%); gender (remained in two categories: male: 48%; female: 52%); educational level (originally recoded in three categories: lower level: 31.5%; middle level: 57.6%, upper level: 10.9%); income level (originally recoded in three categories: low: 45%; medium: 26.6%; high 28.4%); economic activity (I collapsed the original eight categories in two main categories: active: 52.9%, and inactive: 47.1%); residence (I recoded the original variable in three categories: small settlement (0–4,999 inhabitants): 34.4%; medium size settlement (5,000–100,000 inhabitants): 35.9%; big settlement (over 100,000 inhabitants): 29.7%).

Beside the socio-demographic and economic indicators, I introduced the indicator of religiosity, as it appears to be an important attitudinal component of social capital and thus also of trust. In conclusion, I collapsed the religiosity variable in a categorical indicator in the following way: religious person: 82.7%, and not a religious person: 17.3%.

## **Methodology**

First, I am going to identify – using factor analysis – the internal structure of institutional trust in Romania, based on the specific individual trust in every single named institution according to the variables presented in Table 1. As a second step, I am going to analyze the internal structure of trust – both institutional and generalized. Thirdly, I intend to identify those socio-demographical indicators, if there are any, which play a significant role in institutional and generalized trust in Romania.



The factor analysis reveals a coherent internal structure of the trust in Romania. Firstly, the variables of generalized trust create a singular factor. Secondly, trust in different types of institutions can be clearly identified. So the institutions in the first factor are the security and/or welfare state institutions. The second factor collects the international political institutions; the third factor resumes the democratic, decision-making institutions, the fourth factor collects the traditional institutions, while the sixth factor represents the lobbying institutions.

As the third step, in order to identify the roots of trust in formal and informal institutions, I used the OLS regression. The dependent variables were the above described five types of institutions, and the generalized trust presented in Table 3. Beside the factor scores, I used the socio-demographic indicators and religiosity as explanatory variables. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The results of the OLS regression analysis. Cell entries are unstandardized Beta coefficients. Variable values equal to 0 are reference categories (data source EVS, 2008)

	Institutional trust					Generalized trust
	Traditional national institutions	Decision making institutions	Social security institutions	Lobbying institutions	International institutions	
<i>Age:</i>						
18-35	0	0	0	0	0	0
36-55	-0.085	0.034	0.009	0.029	-0.088	0.111
55+	-0.264**	0.023	0.106	0.011	0.058	0.141
<i>Gender:</i>						
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0
Female	-0.054	-0.017	-0.065	0.123	0.236***	0.093
<i>Education level:</i>						
lower	0.170*	-0.028	-0.065	0.013	0.050	0.088
medium	0	0	0	0	0	0
upper	0.193	0.076	0.276*	-0.107	-0.207	-0.251*
<i>Economical status:</i>						
active	0	0	0	0	0	0
inactive	0.025	0.207*	-0.041	0.110	-0.120	-0.088
<i>Income level:</i>						
low	0	0	0	0	0	0
medium	0.327***	0.082	-0.231**	-0.076	-0.005	0.233**
high	0.296***	0.047	-0.362***	-0.012	-0.126	0.493***
<i>Settlement size:</i>						
small	0	0	0	0	0	0
medium	0.212**	0.418***	-0.080	0.007	0.025	0.097
big	0.199*	0.340***	0.052	0.127	0.103	0.064

	Institutional trust					Generalized trust
	Traditional national institutions	Decision making institutions	Social security institutions	Lobbying institutions	International institutions	
<i>Religiosity:</i>						
not religious	0	0	0	0	0	0
religious	-0.644***	0.124	-0.259**	0.242*	0.095	0.030
Constant	0.230*	-0.509***	0.338**	-0.395**	-0.141	-0.403***
	R <sup>2</sup> =0.137	R <sup>2</sup> =0.046	R <sup>2</sup> =0.038	R <sup>2</sup> =0.025	R <sup>2</sup> =0.028	R <sup>2</sup> =0.043
	F=12.191	F=3.711	F=3.001	F=1.964	F=2.202	F=3.486
	p<0.001	p<0.001	p<0.01	p<0.05	p<0.05	p<0.001
	N=855	N=855	N=855	N=855	N=855	N=855

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05

First of all, mention must be made of the fact that I received the same results as previous researchers did (e.g. Nistor et al. 2011) in cases where the low level of the R squares shows the complexity of trust as a social phenomenon, therefore it cannot be reduced to a few socio-demographical, economical indicators and to religiosity.

Beside this result, some association between the explanatory variables and trust in different types of formal institutions or generalized others can be found.

## Discussion

The factor I called *traditional national institutions* includes the church, the army and school. The trust in these institutions reaches the highest level among the ones presented in the questionnaire. Their aggregate level of trust passes well over 50%, which is in concordance with the previous findings which signal a high level of trust in the Romanian society towards the church and the army, showing also a considerable constancy (Abraham and Gânju 2000; Tufiş 2007, 2009). The third element of this group is that of the educational institutions, which have a similar confidence profile as the army in 2008.

Searching for the roots of trust in the traditional institutions, generally it can be supposed that religious and elderly people tend to trust more this type of institutions. When religiosity is used as an explanatory factor of the differences in the variance of trust, in cross-European analysis, the comparison is usually made between Catholics and Protestants. However, Van Oorschot finds that the key factor in reaching a high level of social capital is not the denomination, but the high frequency of attending church (Van Oorschot 2006, 163). The association between the frequency of church attendance was highly significant ( $\chi^2=281.917$ ;  $df=12$ ;  $\gamma=0.540$ ) in Romania in 2008, so I conclude that religiosity is one of

the important roots of trust in traditional national institutions, like the church. These findings enforce the previous results, as it is proved that religiosity in Romania explains the high level of trust in the church and the army (Sandu 1999). In opposition, the higher level of income along with the bigger size of the settlement of residence reduces the level of trust. The lower level of education also reduces the confidence level in this group of institutions. Trust in the army had and still has a steady base among elderly people; this characteristic seems to be constant for Romania (Sandu 1999; Abraham and Gânju 2000).

Returning to the church, the high level of trust remains, even if there are some really tough attacks, mainly in mass media, against the representatives of the church (like cooperating with “securitatea”) (Tufiş 2007).

These results confirm the previous results regarding Romania, as trust in the church and the army reaches a high level. This can be interpreted from the perspectives of both theories presented by Mishler and Rose: in a cultural perspective, trust towards the church, the army and school could be considered traditional and its positive adjudication can be the result of the early socialization. Additionally, I think that an important role can be assigned to the fact that these institutions showed at least a formal consistency in the past, meaning that they were present during the whole communist period.

From the other perspective, taking the performance of these institutions into consideration, I assume that even if their performance was highly coordinated by the communist regime, the church, army and school apparently did not lose their original role and aim of existence. Moreover, as the previous results show (Sandu 1999; Voicu 2005; Tufiş 2007) the – Orthodox – church and the army are considered the symbolic institutions of the state, with a strictly internal hierarchy, which is in perfect concordance with Hofstede’s power distance characteristics of Romania’s value orientation. I presume, the fact that the confidence in the educational system enters into this elite group of highly trusted institutions because its internal hierarchy is also a clear one, and the value of paper based knowledge – as a way of granting social mobility – has a high appreciation among the citizens of Romania.

The trust in the decision-making institutions – which include the parliament, the government and the political parties – shows a different type of trust structure. This group represents the opposite side of the traditional national institutions – they were the less trusted institutions in Romania in 2008, as only a quarter or less of the people had trust in them. In a historical and comparative perspective, a low level of trust in the government, the parliament and the political parties could be observed in the period between 1991–2000 (Abraham et al. 2000, 84), a period in which the level of trust continuously diminished, with the exceptions of the after elections periods. Between 2006 and 2008, the trust in these institutions shows an “atypical increase” (Tufiş 2009), but even so, this remains at a low level as compared to other EU member states.

Regarding the roots of trust, economically inactive persons have less trust in the decision-making institutions than active ones. The size of the residence settlement also plays a significant role, as the people from towns and cities tend to trust less these types of institutions.

Also, a plausible explanation for the low level of trust could be the moral crisis (Zamfir 2004), or a sceptical appreciation of the political institutions due to their low level of capacity (Tufiş 2007).

It also must be mentioned that a comparative study among European states reveals that the trust in the institutions of representative democracy is present at a lower level than the trust in implementing institutions (Grönlund and Setata 2012, 538).

The third group of institutions, which I called *social security and welfare institutions*, includes the police, the civil services, the social security system, the health care system and the justice system. For a historical comparison of the evolution of the trust level in the above mentioned institutions, I need to discuss the police and justice system separately from the rest, as in most cases social security institutions are presented separately from welfare institutions.

In the Romanian society in the period between 1991 and 2000 there were different types of evolutions regarding Justice and Police; while the former continuously loses citizens' trust (1991=40%, 2000=20%), the latter gained trust (1991=33%, 2000=43%) (Abraham and Gânju 2000, 82).

On the other hand, regarding the welfare institutions, the debate about the acceptance and maintenance of these, and generally about the welfare state, could be the subject of a separate paper. Now I only intend to identify the roots of trust in these types of institutions. Edlund argues that the support for the welfare state can be explained by the perspective of people's position on the labour market. As a conclusion, all the categories which could benefit more imminently from the state oriented resource allocation are positive to the idea of the welfare state. So the workers (in the blue collar sense), the employees of the public sector, the women, the singles with children, the young and the elderly tend to "restore" the welfare state in Sweden (Edlund 2006, 404). These findings were affirmed more recently by Voicu et al. based on a cross-European analysis: "better educated and wealthier people (...) are more likely to place at the level of the individual the responsibility for their own well-being. Those depending on the welfare system, such as unemployed or retired are more likely to sustain a broader welfare state" (Voicu et al. 2011, 83).

These findings are not always supported by my results. The explanation could reside in the broad range of institutions presented in this group. The roots of trust in the discussed institutions can be detected among those persons who have a medium or high level of income. Religiosity also plays a significant role, as religious persons trust the social security and welfare institutions more than

the opposite side. In concordance with the earlier findings, the upper level of education diminishes the level of trust in these institutions.

A separate group of institutions are the ones I called *lobbying institutions*, and this group includes the press and the labour unions. The evolution in time of the above mentioned institutions shows a relative fluctuation. Regarding the labour unions, in the period analyzed by Abraham and Gânju – from 1991 till 2000 – its level of trust reached the peak in 1997, when 26% of Romania's population declared that they trusted this institution (Abraham and Gânju 2000, 82). In comparison, when the confidence level reached an aggregate 36% in 2008, this meant a serious increase. The evaluation of the press is more difficult, as in the referred literature, the issue of trust was investigated separately for the different type of media (television, press, meaning printing press and radio). Generally speaking, the trust in media is higher than the trust in the labour union, as almost half of the population trust media institutions. Looking for the roots of the trust in this group of institution, I found that the only significant explanatory variable is religion, in the sense that religious people tend to trust less the above mentioned institutions.

The last separate group is the one which amasses the *international institutions*. As I mentioned in the case of the welfare state, the evaluation of this result could also be singularly the subject of a different paper. Looking for the aggregate level of trust in international institutions, it is easily remarkable that this group follows closely the national traditional institutions. As Tufiş remarked, the most trusted institutions in Romania are the apolitical institutions, followed by the international political institutions (Tufiş 2009). The question why the level of trust in international institutions in Romania is so high could also be the subject of another study. From the point of view of my explanatory variables, there is a singular differentiator factor: gender. The male population of Romania declares a higher level of trust toward the international political institutions than women.

Hypothetically speaking, I can assume that the high and constant level of trust in international political institutions has more roots. From a cultural perspective, the citizens of the former socialist countries widely accepted the idea that "Western is better than Eastern". As in Romania the church and the army are considered to symbolize the state, in an analogue way, it can be assumed that NATO, EU and UN symbolize the "west". From an institutional perspective, the performance of an institution influences its appreciation. In Romania, even prior to the accession, trust in international institutions reached high levels among citizens, despite that they had little factual knowledge about these institutions' history, structure or functions (Tufiş 2007, 136). Contrary to previous expectations, which hypothesized that the actual knowledge and experience will undermine this high level of trust, as it happened in other Central European countries (Tufiş 2007, 136), the data shows the opposite: in 2008 the trust in EU, NATO and UN remains at high levels.

Generalized trust is also a widely debated problem. Beside the trust in formal institutions, generalized trust is also considered a fundamental resource of democracy in Romania as well (Bădescu 2003, 114).

The educational level influences the general trust in other people negatively, while with the increase of income the trust in other people increases significantly. This finding is confirmatory, as the mainstream of the social capital literature proves the positive interconnection between different types of capital; in my case, the connection between material and trust capital is widely accepted.

## Conclusions

The main finding of my analysis is that trust in institutions – at least in Romania – has a coherent internal structure, as the population perceives it. Due to this fact, I could delimitate five categories of institutions.

In the search for the root of trust in institutions, I found that the person's income level plays the biggest role among the determinants I used, as it significantly influences both the trust towards the traditional national non-political institutions – negatively – and the welfare and security institutions – positively.

Religiosity also plays an important role on the level of trust, showing a positive influence on trust towards the traditional institutions and the welfare and security institutions. On the other hand, religious people tend to have less trust in the lobbying institutions. Age only played a significant role in the case of traditional national institutions, meaning that the elderly people have more trust in these types of institutions. The education level plays a different role, as while a lower level of education reduces the level of trust in traditional institutions, an upper level of trust influences negatively the trust in security and welfare institutions. Gender, contrary to my initial expectation based on the literature, plays a significant role only in the case of international political institutions, as the male population tend to have more trust in them.

The size of the settlement of a person's residence also influences the level of trust in different types of institutions. Living in a medium or big size town seems to have generally a negative effect toward the trust in the institutions, as it significantly reduces the level of trust in traditional national institutions and in democratic, decision-making institutions as well.

Regarding the trust level in the analyzed institutions, I think that while there is a high level of trust towards the traditional national institutions, such as the church and the army, and towards foreign political institutions like EU and UN, the national political institutions are on the opposite side, lacking the citizens' confidence, therefore the democracy cannot be considered entirely stable and consolidated in Romania. Accordingly, the concern conceived by Tufiş (2007) remains actual.

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